

#### 4VAC15-240-81

#### Game: Turkey: Validating tags and checking turkey by licensee

##### Summary:

This proposal is to remove all references to checking, check stations, and check cards to reflect the requirement for all big game harvests to be reported electronically using either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors Virginia mobile harvest reporting application beginning in the 2021-22 hunting season.

##### Proposed language of amendment:

#### **4VAC15-240-81 Validating tags and ~~checking reporting~~ turkey by licensee.**

A. Any person killing a turkey shall, before removing the carcass from the place of kill, validate an appropriate tag on his special license for hunting deer and turkey by completely removing the designated notch area from the tag or by electronically notching a tag and reporting the turkey using the department's mobile harvest reporting application. Place of kill shall be defined as the location where the animal is first reduced to possession. It shall be unlawful for any person to validate (notch) a turkey tag from any special license for hunting deer and turkey prior to the killing of a turkey. A turkey tag that is mistakenly validated (notched) prior to the killing of a turkey must be immediately voided by the licensee by writing, in ink, the word "VOID" on the line provided on the tag. All electronically notched tags are permanent and cannot be voided.

B. Upon killing a turkey and validating (notching) a license tag, as provided above, the licensee shall, upon vehicle transport of the carcass or at the conclusion of legal hunting hours, whichever occurs first, and without unnecessary delay, ~~present the carcass and validated (notched) license tag to an authorized checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the turkey was killed or~~ report his kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. ~~Turkeys killed during the January season (as prescribed in 4VAC15-240-10) and the spring turkey seasons (as prescribed in 4VAC15-240-40 and 4VAC15-240-60) must be reported through the department's automated harvest reporting system. The person reporting the carcass will be given a game check card furnished by the department or~~ a confirmation number from the automated harvest reporting system. The successful hunter shall then immediately record the ~~game check card number or~~ confirmation number, in ink, on the line provided on the license tag that was validated (notched) in the field. ~~If checked at a big game check station, the game check card must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, the game check card must be securely attached to the carcass.~~ If reported using the automated harvest reporting system, no check card is required as long as the hunter who killed the turkey is in possession of the carcass. If the automated harvest reported carcass is left unattended or transferred to the possession of another individual, written documentation including the successful hunter's full name, the date the turkey was killed, and the confirmation number must be created and kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, this written documentation must be securely attached to the carcass.

C. It shall be unlawful for any person to destroy the identity of the sex of any turkey killed unless and until the license tag is validated (notched) and reported ~~to an authorized checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the turkey was killed or~~ by using the automated harvest reporting system as required by this section. Any turkey found in the possession of any person without a validated (notched) license tag or documentation that the turkey has been reported ~~to an authorized checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department~~

~~in the county or adjoining counties in which the turkey was killed or~~ by using the automated harvest reporting system as required by this section shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law.

**Rationale:**

Beginning in the fall of 2021 all harvest reporting will occur electronically through either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors mobile application. Mandatory game checking, a cornerstone of DWRs game management program for more than 70 years, will remain vital for game management in Virginia for many years to come. Thus, it is critical that every hunter report their harvest using one of the electronic reporting systems. Since 2004, DWR has offered some form of electronic reporting, and beginning in 2019, electronic reporting options were available for all species for which reporting is required. In fall 2019, 86% of all deer, 93% of fall turkeys, 100% of spring turkeys, 100% of bobcats, and 58% of all bears were reported through an electronic reporting system.

The proposed amendments remove all references to physical check stations and check cards and adds language in reference to the “e-notch” feature of the mobile application which allows a hunter to electronically notch a tag on their license from their smartphone.